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U.S. House Votes to Condemn UN Over Israel, but Two-state Solution Clause Irks Hardliners

Netanyahu welcomes the resolution, which enjoyed bipartisan support, and calls on Obama to prevent any additional international moves.

Amir Tibon and Barak Ravid | Jan 06, 2017 2:21 PM



House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Rep. Ed Royce, R-Calif., left, listening to the committee's ranking member Rep. Eliot Engel, D-N.Y., on Capitol Hill in Washington, Sept. 14, 2016. Credit: Jacquelyn Martin/AP

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The U.S. House of Representatives approved on Thursday a bipartisan resolution condemning United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334, passed late last month, which harshly criticized Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

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The resolution, introduced by Reps. Ed Royce (R-CA) and Eliot Engel (D-NY) and passed 342-80, was met with initial criticism by some Republicans who opposed the pro-Israel resolution because it included a clause calling for a two-state solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The Royce-Engel resolution expresses opposition to [UN Security Council Resolution 2334](#) and calls for it to be repealed or altered significantly.



Members of the UN Security Council vote on a resolution to stop Israeli settlements on December 23, 2016. Credit: AFP PHOTO / UN / Manuel ELIAS

"After the outrageous anti-Israeli resolution the U.S. Congress made a different decision. Members of Congress expressed outright support for Israel and outright opposition to the Security Council resolution," Netanyahu said.

"Members of Congress know that the Western Wall is not occupied territory and they expressed their intention to revoke or amend the U.N.'s anti-Israeli resolution. This is exactly our intention and our work plan." the prime minister added.

Israel's envoy to the UN, Danny Danon also praised the vote as "proof that American support of Israel crosses party lines."

"We look forward to working together with the new administration and start a new era in the UN which will put an end to the organization's bias against Israel," Danon also said.

The resolution also calls on the Obama administration to prevent any future decisions of this kind before his term ends in two weeks' time. It says that international forums like the UN were not the appropriate venue for solving the conflict, and that the United

All

between Israel and the Palestinians.

The resolution said that "a durable and sustainable peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians will come only through direct bilateral negotiations between the parties resulting in a Jewish, democratic state living side-by-side next to a de-militarized Palestinian state in peace and security."

It also included a clause saying that "the United States should work to facilitate serious, direct negotiations between the parties without preconditions toward a sustainable peace agreement."

The Royce-Engel resolution is [joined by a bi-partisan bid introduced Wednesday at the Senate](#), which also condemned the UN's resolution, and at the same time, included clear support of a two-state solution.

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A number of leading Jewish-American organizations, among them AIPAC, the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League, expressed strong support for the resolution.

For these groups, the resolution's main benefit was that it strongly criticizes the anti-settlement Security Council resolution which the Obama administration decided not to veto, while at the same time receiving the support of many Democrats for including a clear reference to the two-state solution.

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from taking any further steps on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict after the January 15th Paris peace conference, a possibility that has been mentioned by Prime Minister Netanyahu as a cause for concern.

From the left-wing side of the Jewish political spectrum, J Street announced that it opposed the resolution "for its inaccurate, unfair, and unhelpful depiction of the Obama administration's actions at the United Nations.

"We commend the Members of Congress who voted against this resolution today based on their support for a two-state solution," a J Street statement said.

Some Republican lawmakers and right-wing activists believe the resolution is a self-defeating error for a party that has deleted any reference to a two-state solution from its platform.

"Maybe the resolution would have lost some supporters on the Democratic side if this clause was dropped," one Republican opponent of the resolution told Haaretz, "but many others would have supported it anyway, if only to send a message to the United Nations."

Congressman Louie Gohmert (R-TX) cited the two-state reference as a reason why he would not support the motion.

"Hebron is in what was the Promised Land, David ruled from there, and in a two-state solution, Hebron is going to the Palestinians," Gohmert said. "How do they deserve the land that was given as the Promised Land before Mohammad even existed? I can't support this resolution. I can't do it."

Rep. Steve King (R-IA) also criticized the resolution. He said it "has a lot of good and right in it," but is wrong to include support of the two-state solution, which according to King "has run its course."

Jeff Ballabon, a Republican political strategist involved in the effort to remove the two-state solution from the party platform told Haaretz that some pro-Israeli leaders and politicians who oppose a two-state solution, nevertheless have decided to support the Royce-Engel resolution, because they believe it could deter the Obama administration from taking further steps before January 20,

"Here is how it was described to me by a pro-Israel leader who supports the resolution despite their opposition to two-states: 'the two-state solution is like cancer, but right now, Obama is about to unleash a heart-attack on Israel, so we need to stop the immediate threat and then we can deal with the long-term one,'" Ballabon said.

Ballabon said he "tactically disagree[s] with this position, but respect[s] it." The problem with the resolution, he said, is that "it sends the wrong message to Israel and the rest of the world, that the United States is still insistent on creating another Arab state in Judea and Samaria. That's not true.

"I think one of the problems here," says Ballabon, "is that Israel supporters who have been on the defensive for 25 years, are simply not used to suddenly being able to play offense."

One right-wing group that opposes the two-state solution yet came out in favor of the resolution, is the Endowment for Middle East Truth (EMET,) a think-tank based in Washington, D.C.. In a message to its supporters on Thursday evening, EMET clarified that "our endorsement had nothing, what-so-ever, to do with support of the two-state solution. Rather, it has everything to do with the United Nations not being the appropriate forum to settle this dispute."

The Senate resolution was introduced by Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL), who said in March that conditions for a two-state solution don't exist. It was co-sponsored by Majority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-KY) and eight other Republican Senators, in addition to 10 Democratic senators.

Some Republicans thought that getting Democrats to strongly condemn the Security Council's anti-settlement resolution, was worth the price of a verbal and harmless reference to a political solution that isn't likely to be implemented anytime soon.

David Friedman, President-elect Donald Trump's candidate to be the next U.S. ambassador to Israel is a staunch opponent of the two-state solution.

However, when incoming White House Chief of Staff Reince Priebus

All

Trump administration won't support the two-state solution, he replied that Trump won't be bound to his ambassador's position.

It is worth noting that Prime Minister Netanyahu said in an interview to 60 Minutes in November he hopes to work together with Trump towards a two-state solution, and that the last Republican administration, led by President George W. Bush, officially supported the plan as well.



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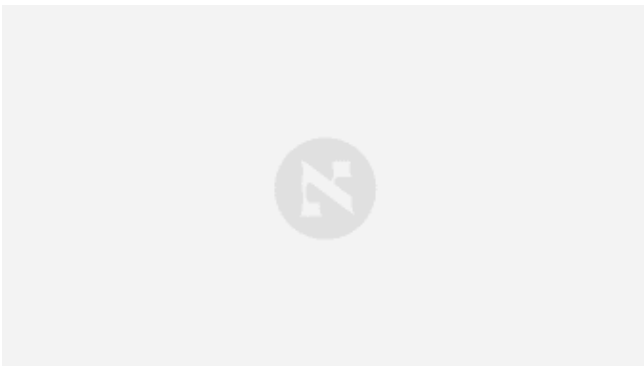
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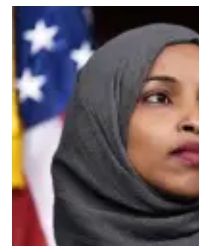
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